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LETTER DATED 3 MAY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CROATIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Upon instructions from my Government, I should like to refer to the letters of Ambassador Vladislav Jovanović, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations (S/1999/471 and S/1999/480), concerning the security issue of Prevlaka. The aforementioned letters contain a series of factually incorrect assertions.

It is not my intention to enter into a protracted debate so as to disprove the misconceptions asserted by Ambassador Jovanović, which can readily be refuted by cursory reference to the Secretary-General's report on Prevlaka (S/1999/404), as well as by oral reports to the United Nations Security Council by the United Nations Secretariat. Rather, I should like to register the serious concern of my Government in regard to two points made by Ambassador Jovanović in his letters.

My Government finds disturbing the proclaimed need of the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to have a military checkpoint in the demilitarized zone in the area of Prevlaka and the intention not to resume bilateral negotiations on a permanent solution to the security issue of Prevlaka with my Government until NATO ceases its military operation.

As evidenced by its actions, the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia does not, nor has it the intention to, respect bilateral agreements with the Republic of Croatia on the demilitarization of Prevlaka and relevant Security Council resolutions dealing with the same issue. Likewise, by announcing the unilateral cessation of bilateral negotiations, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia directly contravenes those Security Council resolutions which urge the intensification of negotiations with the aim of reaching a permanent solution to the issue of Prevlaka. It is the firm position of my Government that the Security Council should send a clear message to the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that it shall not tolerate Yugoslav Army checkpoints in the demilitarized zone nor any other violations of the demilitarized zone or its resolutions.

Croatia strongly objects to the assertion of Ambassador Jovanović that it is using the current situation in the region in the advancement of its own

goals. Croatia is far from satisfied with developments in the region, which have already caused it significant economic losses. My Government deeply regrets all civilian casualties. However, Croatia has supported and continues to support the NATO humanitarian intervention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as the last resort to protect the Albanian civilian population of Kosovo.

I should like to recall that Croatia is determined to resolve all outstanding security issues with its neighbours through peaceful means and in accordance with bilateral agreements and international law. Therefore, it is our duty as a Contracting Party to the agreements on the demilitarization of Prevlaka and as a subject of the relevant Security Council resolutions on the issue of Prevlaka to report on violations of the established demilitarized regime.

Another matter which I should like to bring to your attention and which is of particular concern for my Government is the fate of Antun Masle, a journalist of the Croatian weekly magazine Globus. Mr. Masle was apprehended on 20 April 1999 by military authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the absurd accusation of spreading defeatism and misinformation to the public, after one of his articles on the possible deployment of NATO ground forces published in Globus was also carried by the Montenegrin newspaper Dani. I call upon the Security Council to condemn the arbitrary apprehension of Antun Masle and to demand his immediate release.

I should like to request your assistance in circulating the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ivan Šimonović
Permanent Representative